

Abstract

A method and apparatus for rapidly soliciting the help of nearby people in a crisis situation such as a kidnapping is disclosed. The invention allows a person such as a parent to alert people who are within a specified radius of the person to voluntarily assist in looking for a missing child, pet, elderly person or other party in the area immediately surrounding the site where the party was last seen. The system allows for this assistance to be solicited within seconds of recognition of the fact that the party is missing. The system operates over the public mobile phone network using available location based services (LBS) technology such as those mandated by the FCC for enhanced 911 mobile emergency calls. Users, once notified of the missing child, could log their locations into the system if they spot the child at a specific time after they receive the alert. The resultant child tracking record is reported to the initial caller periodically by mobile. In addition, local "hot spot" wireless networks based at retail stores, museums, amusement parks etc can also be used to specify the users' location. The alert signal received from a particular wireless hot point in a retail store, for example, would initiate a request for help in searching for the missing person to be broadcast to the same hot point in the same retail store or nearby hotspots over a network managed by a wireless hot spot aggregator or a wireless carrier.